National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

# Symptoms of heat illness among Latino farm workers in North Carolina

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**Abstract:**

BACKGROUND: Symptoms of occupational heat illness provide an early warning that workers are in potentially life-threatening environmental conditions. PURPOSE: This analysis was designed to assess the extent to which strategies to reduce the health impact of extreme heat were associated with the prevalence of heat illness among Latino farm workers. METHODS: Between June and September 2009, a total of 300 Latino men and women participated in a cross-sectional survey about farm worker health. Participants reported whether they were employed through the H-2A temporary agricultural worker program and whether they had ever worked in conditions of extreme heat during their work in the U.S. agricultural industry. Workers who had worked in extreme heat also responded to questions about selected activities and behaviors and whether they experienced symptoms of heat illness. Data analysis was conducted in 2009 to assess associations of altering work hours and activities, drinking more water, resting in shaded areas, and going to air-conditioned places during or after work, with the prevalence of symptoms of heat illness among H-2A and non-H-2A workers. RESULTS: Working in extreme heat was reported by 281 respondents (94%), among whom 112 (40%) reported symptoms of heat illness. Changes in work hours and activities during hot conditions were associated with a lower prevalence of heat illness among H-2A workers but not among non-H-2A workers. CONCLUSIONS: These findings suggest the need to improve the understanding of working conditions for farm workers and to assess strategies to reduce agricultural workers' environmental heat exposure.

**Source:** http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2963149

## Resource Description

**Exposure :**

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Temperature

**Temperature:** Extreme Heat

**Geographic Feature:**

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Rural

**Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

United States

**Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury, Other Health Impact

**Other Health Impact:** Heat related illness

**Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

**Population of Concern:** A focus of content

**Population of Concern:**

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Workers

**Resource Type:**

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

**Resilience:**

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

**Timescale:**

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

**Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:**

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content